

Webinar: Mental Health COVID-19 webinar

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Carolyn Phillips: Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us as we continue our series of looking at assistive technology solutions and strategies during this time of COVID-19 and helping people navigate. There's so many different types of solutions and we want to make sure that each of you know about these and we hope you will share it with other folks. This webinar will focus on tips and resources for successfully managing mental health. Mental health is one of those things that we continue to hear about being an issue and we understand that. That makes total sense. We want to make sure that folks are aware that there are solutions out there. I'm excited too that as we move through this webinar and this time together to let you know this is really just the beginning of a conversation. It does not have to be the end of a conversation. You can reach out to us after this and we can continue figuring out what can work. There are so many solutions and here are just a few that we're going to be sharing.

As we move through this, we want you to think about

several pieces. One of them is that our Tools for Life team is absolutely responding and continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have collected and vetted this amazing resource of a collection for individuals within the community and circles of support and their family members. So we want to make sure you have access to that. That's on our website. I'm very thankful to our whole team that pulled that together. We encourage you to take advantage of that. The resources we're going to talk about today with you in this presentation are not meant to replace advice or instruction from your physician or doctor or medical team. These are resources here that can help you become even more educated and empowered. We encourage you to take this information and dive in deeper. Do some more research and share what you learn with your medical team and your support system and see if it does help.

So please listen to that and know that we take that to heart.

All these presentations that we've done including this one and resources are accessible. And they are all going to be posted. This one will be posted also to the Tools for Life website which you can get to at www.gaTFL.gatech.edu. We ask that you share this information with anybody that would benefit from it. It's great to have resources that you can turn to in a conversation and be able to say this might

help.

Know that we are absolutely here with you. We're in this together and together we're stronger. We do want you to stay safe and be educated and continue to grow. If you have resources that you want to send our way, we are absolutely open to that.

I love that this little phrase we have it's a play off of the famous saying about keep calm. So we encourage you to keep calm and stay smart as we move through this whole COVID-19 pandemic together.

We also encourage you to get in touch with your assistive technology act program. If you're within the United States, we've gotten information that folks all over the world are listening to these webinars. We encourage you to find your assistive technology act program by visiting the AT3 center. It's www.at3center.net. I'm happy to introduce our presenters. I'm going to turn this over to them in a moment.

I want to pause and let you know that your very lucky to be learning from these folks who are willing to take that deeper dive and come up with not just regurgitating and saying this is a solution, but they actually try it out. Liz Persaud is our program and outreach manager has done an outstanding job leading this series. Martha Rust is our AT direct services manager. I'm glad that Tori Hughes is with

us. She is looking at the prospects of all of this as he serves as the outreach specialist. We'll also hear from Sal Kibler who has been working with us for quite a while and we're thankful for her being an AT services intern. Sal, I will turn this over to you. Hopefully you all learn a lot from this webinar and keep in touch with us.

Sal Kibler: Thank you, Carolyn. Well, I don't know about the rest of you, but I feel disconnected. It's really hard not to be seeing my friends and neighbors and family members and the people down the street that I see at stores and restaurants. I have really been grateful for the opportunity for online social connections. It's also a way for you to get a little relief from your family if you've been around them for a little bit too long. Here are three ideas that we offer to you that are all easy to use and might help you out.

The first is one that you probably have heard of a lot of times. Facebook groups. They had a great ad with basset hounds over the winter. They have four categories. Buy, sell, supports and fitness and hobbies and interest. I thought I would skip buy sell, but I think it might be a great opportunity to sell gently used items. The one that comes up for me the most is hobbies and interest. You can find -- you wouldn't believe -- any possible interest you may have whether it's sewing or knitting or a stamp collector

or art or music. If you go to your Facebook page you can put in Facebook groups and it will come up or you can use this link. When you go there they actually can look at your profile and give you ideas for groups that you may want to join. Pretty fun. The next one is Zoom. Zoom many of us had never heard of three months ago. Now Zoom is everywhere. I think people think of it as something just for education or business meetings, but it is really great to get together with friends. I've been doing this a lot. You can actually get on to Zoom free for 40 minutes and you can have up to 100 people and unlimited one on one. People are doing it all the time for all kinds of activities. So you can connect with your friends, neighbors, loved ones, you can have a coffee break with someone or a happy hour. Just go to this link [Zoom.US](https://zoom.us).

Over to the side we have a link to a video in which someone has done a really good job on how to get started and invite some friends. It's not very hard. Once you have done it once you will be in great shape.

Also there's something called House Party which is no cost. You invite your friends from Facebook, contact lists and snapchat. It's a social network but a one on one social network. Up to 8 people can enter a video room. You can even play games with your friends. You can play trivia, heads up, Gauc and chips. It also sends you an alert if your friends

enter House Party. You have to be 12 or older. It is House Party.com. We have given a video here on how to get started.

Martha Rust: Thank you, Sal. I'm going to cover some online therapy and doctor's visits. I know lots of people -- some of my friends too -- are quarantined with family or away from their doctors or whatever. So there's a website called Dr. On demand.com. You can have access to a doctor 24/7. There's an app available. If you don't have insurance, they are supposed to have affordable pricing without insurance. It's not just physical health, you also have mental health here. You can look up if you need someone to talk to as well.

Next I'm going to cover virtual therapy. We're living in a time like no other time. I want everyone to know it's okay to ask for help. We are living through times where we don't know what next week is going to bring. I can't plan my calendar at all right now. It's interesting the way things are going with this time that we're living in right now. So I want everyone to know it's okay to ask for help. You can do this in a variety different ways. There's Facebook chat groups. A lot of them focus on different kinds of things when it comes to mental health. Online groups as well in your area. Maybe you don't want to know anyone in your area, that's great.

You can check with your current doctor or therapist. They could be doing online therapy as well. I have a friend right now who is married with kids and needed some more help through the day trying to navigate this. They are actually using online therapy. She meets with her therapist in her car. That's the one place that she knows she can be alone with our therapist. So a lot of your therapist will meet you wherever you are at. Whether you're outside or inside on your couch or wherever.

There's lots of different ones available now which I think is great as we are on the go society. There's different methods available. There's some such as talk space which Michael Phelps advertising for. Better help. Psychhub. There's also ones for kids. They're missing their teachers and that education and being -- learning together with each other. They may not be able to express what they're feeling and why they're feeling. You may see kids regress or begin to act out because they don't understand what they're feeling. So there's even the child mind institute that can help search for therapy for the little ones as well.

Liz Persaud: I want to take a few moments and piggyback on to what Martha's introduction to virtual online therapy and highlight a few apps out there that really stuck out just for different audiences. This is called what's up.

It's a free app that uses CBT or cognitive behavioral therapy and ACT which is acceptance commitment therapy to help with coping with depression anxiety, stress and more. You can use the habit tracker to maintain the good habits and then those that you want to break. That's a feature I thought was helpful. There's a page called get grounded that contains over 100 different questions to pinpoint what you're feeling. Sometimes we need a guide on what to focus on. There's a page called thinking patterns that helps stop negative internal monologues.

This other one is called mind shift. This one I like and want [/-TD](#) to highlight because it was designed for younger folks. Teens and younger adults with anxiety. It stresses the [/POPBS](#) of changing how you think about anxiety and helps change your life and ride out intense emotions and face challenges situations.

This one I like called SAM. This one is designed specifically for teens and young adults with anxiety. Just helping you change that mind set the way you're thinking about anxiety and face challenging situations and offering lots of different questions and pages within the app and the service just to help you gauge through that process. So again, just very helpful resources there.

Then we're going to jump into resources that you don't really have to have technology on hand to utilize.

Often times we're struggling with online fatigue whether at work through meetings or after hours. It's a lot of screen time. We want to share resources that you don't have to utilize technology to be successful.

Sal Kibler: Hi, this is Sal again. A couple apps you might find helpful for calm, head space and great courses. These are ways to help you keep calm and positive. Calm has been pretty popular. It's now a 2-week free trial. It's gorgeous pictures and sounds. You don't have to do anything except go with the flow. I find it very relaxing and a great way to calm down and refocus and to get sleepy if I need to.

Headspace has something called weathering the storm. It's free. You can find that online. Similar to Calm to a certain extent. Then gracecourses has yoga and Tai Chi and these are obviously well-known physical activities that combine meditation, breathing and movement to help people calm down and they're not hard. They're things that almost anybody can do. Just incredibly beneficial and simple to use.

So I recommend those to you.

Tori Holder: Hello, this is Tori. I'm going to talk about some other meditation and mindfulness things that you can go to to get your mind in the right place. So podcasts and music play lists are all over the Internet. We have them in our pockets now with our smart phones. There are so many

different platforms that host different podcasts and music playlist that help foster good habits. Included mindful meditation. All of the major operating systems like Spotify, apple podcasts and Google play music. I have used these personally. There's one that is a 21-day positive mindfulness challenge. Every episode is already published. It's 3 weeks of mindfulness and meditation. 10-12 minutes each. So it gives you a little bit of time just a few minutes to regroup and get your head back in the positive light with everything going on.

Martha Rust: So I want to go over exercise. This is a really big one for me. I'm a huge component of exercising. Just walking and bike riding and getting out and just enjoying the sun and air is big for me. This past weekend I was able to go kayaking. It helps me and my mental health. I want to share some curs types with you guys. Walking is simple. It's low impact. Just 12 minutes of walking can change your mood. If you're having a bad mood, maybe go outside and walk for a few minutes. I know not everyone is able to walk in their neighborhood. You can drive somewhere, maybe map it out. You benefit from the sunshine and nature. You can add variety to your daily routine. Try a new route. If you're in a neighbor you can't, I have seen people use empty parking lots. We have a lot of closed businesses over

here. I have seen people doing different types of exercises in parking lots.

You can also look at low impact, low resistance exercise. Our friends at the shepherd center have created low impact exercises. If you have a wheelchair or need to sit down while exercising. My friends at ability 360 have great videos online. My friends in lakeshore Alabama have great videos on low impact exercises no matter where you are or what type of skill you have. YouTube has so many exercises. You can do things like dancing to kick boxing to chair exercises to yoga. I have spent a lot of time these past few weeks exploring different kinds of videos that I can try to do for exercise especially on those rainy days through YouTube. So YouTube is a great resource. Many things are free.

Other things too. Social media has been really big. All the celebrities are quarantined as well. If there's a celebrity that you have a crush on and you want to work out with them, check and make sure and see if they're actually doing some online workouts. Especially through Instagram. Yoga is definitely a great -- sometimes it's just slow movements and deep breaths. You don't have to do all of the hard poses. Sometimes just sitting still or lying down is my favorite pose. Where you just breathe in deep can help relax and help with your mood as well.

You can use items around your home. I often use soup cans throughout the day. Especially when it's raining I will walk around the house and do soup cans. You can use that if you want to for weights. Your couches and chairs. There's lots of great exercise videos while sitting or using your couch or chair as props. I saw a celebrity trainer who had his feet under the couch and was pushing up under the couch with his feet. Books. My next-door neighbor using books for her weights. She's a college professor.

You can use other people if you have a child or a baby. I have seen people use their partners to help us too when it comes to exercising. So there's all kinds of great ideas out there. You get creative and start moving. I think that's the big thing. We want to keep moving. You want to keep your mobility going. Just getting up and moving around are things to think about.

A gratitude journal. This has been really important to me. I started this at the start of all of this. I was getting a little -- I had anxiety at the start a few months ago. My friend gave me the idea to start a gratitude journal. It's been great. We are living through a historic time. We're trying to make it through the day. So just start looking for at least one thing a day that you're grateful for and write it down no matter how small it seems. A beautiful flower. You're on a walk. Take a picture of it and write it down.

There's a picture here of a yard full of inflatables. They have every single inflatable you can imagine from fourth of July to Christmas. It keeps growing. I feel like I'm one Amazon away from adding to their yard. That makes it into my gratitude journal. Sometimes it's helpful just to write down your thoughts and feelings. Sometimes that's helpful to get out what you're trying to -- what you can't really say. So maybe try a gratitude journal to see how that works.

Another thing could be discover a hidden talent. There's lots of paint and paint by number sets up there. Bob Ross said we don't make mistakes, just happy little accidents. Try painting. I know people who have been sewing a lot. Knitting. Building something. I have friends who are writing poetry right now who have never written poetry before but now they have time to sit down and this is the way they have time to get their feelings out. Singing. I think I sing amazing especially in the shower. You may want to try singing or dancing. Try arts and crafts. There's always something good to do with kids or little ones running around. You can use this time to discover a hidden talent that can help keep your anxiety low and be good for mental health.

Reading. I know not everyone loves to read but reading could help for some people. A couple weeks ago -- I'm in a book club with some friends. We're choosing books that I've never read. Many libraries are allowing you to check

out more audio books and e-books at one time now. I can't tell you how many e-books I have listened to. My library allows me to check out way more than I could before. So reading could be a great thing too.

Liz Persaud: This is something that I wanted to share about water being helpful. On the right side there's two images. One of a beautiful tropical fish with bright orange and pink and right beside it is a beautiful aquarium. If you do research online studies found that aquarium watching reduces stress and anxiety. It creates feelings of relaxation and decreasing heart rate and muscle tension. Staring at a fish tank for 5 minutes almost has a hypnotic effect on you. It tends to calm you down because of our predisposition to regard some natural environments as nonthreatening and essential for survival. So if you have an aquarium, go talk to you fish. We have some tips over here about checking out live aquarium streams. The Georgia aquarium has live streams going on. You can check out the different aquariums all day long. The jelly fish are relaxing to watch. The colors and the way they swim is soothing. Blue cavern aquarium in California has web links up too. I wanted to share this interesting tip.

So now we've got some different tips for relaxation and sleeping that we think will be very helpful.

Tori Holder: I am one of those that I love to sleep. It's one of my favorite things. It's always good to get a good night's sleep so you can feel rested and have a good mindset is. So this is one of the best sleep tracking apps that I've ever come across called sleep cycle. It's a smart alarm clock that will track your sleep and wake you up at the best time during your sleep cycle to make sure you're well rested. I have my alarm to go off in a 30-minute window. Sometimes it will go off at the very beginning or near the end depending on where I am in my sleep cycle. It will track your movements. You keep the screen lit and turn it face down and it tracks your movements. It tracks if you are in a deep sleep and will also track when you happen to wake up or snore. You can see how many times you snore during the night and for how long. You can add sleep notes to see how your daily activities have affected your sleep that night. If you had a long and stressful day, if you had a headache or if you had a good day and worked out. I have added some custom notes for myself and it's great to see I had a 3 o'clock in the afternoon I didn't sleep so well so maybe I need to have coffee earlier in the day. So it's a great way to help me see I went to bed really late and didn't sleep well. So maybe I need to go to bed earlier. There are different guides and stories to help you fall asleep faster in a well-rested way. There's some where you're walking through a forest and you

close your eyes and see the different things, all the trees and flowers and all the different sounds. Some is like a body check. Relax your arms, relax your hands. It's a way to get that restful sleep. There are several different alarm sounds that it will play. It starts off very quietly. It's not a jarring sound. There's several different sounds that are very calm and soothing that won't jolt you awake. That doesn't help you when trying to get a full night's rest. I recommend sleep cycle. It's one of my favorite apps.

Liz Persaud: We all know that rest, relaxation and exercise are unbelievably pertinent to just having a full day and bringing our best self forward. Getting the correct amount of sleep is essential to your ability to process memories. Sleep helps restore your body's [/TPH-RPBLGS](#), repair muscle tissue, triggers the release of hormones and affects growth and appetite. We have a couple tips up here for getting a good night's sleep. Most of us know this but it's good to emphasize. Definitely suggest avoiding stimulates like caffeine in the evening. We don't want to keep ourselves going when we're trying to take that time of day to wind down. It's important to set a wake and sleep schedule to go by. That's important now while working from home or having to be at home more often than daily living, the work routine can all feel like it's all muddled together. So it's important to have a schedule. Even if you're not

getting up and going to grab your coffee at Starbucks and hitting traffic. That may be your typical routine. Maybe making your morning tea or coffee and having some routine even on the weekends is helpful. Your body temperature drops during sleep. Keeping your thermostat at a cool temperature. If it's too hot, I get cranky. The cooler it is it helps me fall asleep quicker. Avoid afternoon naps. There's all sorts of information out there about taking a quick cat nap and how that can be beneficial. I think we get into trouble if we fall asleep for 3 or 4 hours during the day and that will interfere with our sleep cycle of getting to bed on time. Try not to watch TV or do work in bed. If you do, stop an hour before so your brain and unwind and separate from those thoughts and what you were doing on the screen. A lot of folks suggest keeping televisions and work out of your bedroom. If you're not in that position, think about stopping that work or screen time a significant time before falling to sleep. If you typically exercise in the afternoon or evening, sometimes that can be something that affects an individual. So maybe try fitting your workout earlier in the day to see if that helps too.

Lots of benefits to relaxation techniques. They can have so many positive outcomes on our body. Slowing heart rate, lowering blood pressure... [Reading from PowerPoint].

If you think about all of these things they are

critical to everyday function. So practicing those beneficial techniques is important for us to consider. And more relaxation techniques. To get the most benefit using relaxation techniques along with other positive coping methods is what is going to be the beneficial thing in the end. Finding humor. I love to laugh. You can ask any one of these folks on here today, finding humor is important.

Being able to problem-solve, manage time, exercise and getting enough sleep and reaching out to supportive friends and family. We hope that helps with overall successful mental health and positivity as we're all kind of working through new times in our world, if you will.

Carolyn Phillips: That was outstanding. I hope that all of you who have joined us learned a lot. And I'm so impressed with the different solutions and strategies. Sal, House Party. That's awesome and so much fun and so interactive. Such a great way to chill with your friends. Martha, that's so cool your gratitude journal. I'm definitely going to look into that. I appreciate you sharing that. Tori, I hear you about tracking your sleep. What a great app. That's so cool. Liz, excellent tips and definitely going to check out more of the aquariums that are out there.

So we hope that all of you have found something that can help you that gives you some peace of mind if you will.

We encourage you to try these things out. As I said at the very beginning of the webinar, we have the outstanding collection of COVID-19 resources for folks with disabilities and you can find that on our website. If you go to our Wiki which is easy to navigate to. It's the 4th button down on the website. Thank you everybody for pulling all of this together. Thank you for pulling all of the resources together.

I also want to make sure that you know how to get in touch with us. We have a dynamic team of folks here to help. You can reach out to us individually. You can also just reach out to us through our e-mail address for the whole team which is easy to get to. It's a great way to get more information just by reaching out to us. Either at info@ or you can call us at [Reading from PowerPoint].

You can find us on Facebook, twitter and Instagram. I wanted to especially thank you to our presenters and to Heather who is a part of our team here. She is an outstanding captionist. Thank you Heather. We hope you all stay safe. We are here for you in the struggle and in the hope as we collectively move through this pandemic. Take care.